

High Street runs from the Herring Brook in Pembroke down through West Duxbury

SOUTH SHORE NEWS

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The Little Pembroke Street That Went to Sleep

By HELEN S. MELANSON

When one drives down High Street, Pembroke today it is hard to imagine that here was once a busy bustling community with stores, a blacksmith shop, a tin shop, bakery, carriage painting establishment, stage coach depot and even a furniture emporium. But such was the case. My grandmother, who lived down the line in Tarklin, Duxbury, told me that as a child she walked with her mother up to High Street to do the family shopping. "Out of the World into Pembroke" surely did not apply to High Street at this time, by any means. Thayer's Furniture Store was a very large building, almost directly across from Taylor Street, and it did a thriving business. Here one could buy a spinning wheel, a butter churn or a horsehair sofa. One needed to go no further than Thayer's when setting up housekeeping. If your purchases were many a bonus was invariably thrown in for good measure. A very popular bonus was the humble, but very necessary flowered chamber pot. This store burned to the ground in the late 1800's and was never rebuilt. The owners decided to move to Whitman and start business anew, and there one could still trade with this old established firm until recently. Right next door to Thayer's was a grocery store owned and operated by Elisha Delano. The public scales were right in front where one could easily drive up and weigh his load of hay or any other commodity. Inside the store the penny candy counter attracted the children while mother shopped for crackers from the cracker barrel, calico for a new dress, a bustle for her "go to meeting" frock and waited patiently while her coffee was ground. If molasses was needed one brought his molasses jug along to have it filled from the molasses barrel. Father would come later to get the barrel of flour and load it onto his wagon to take home. "Across the street, where the Methodist Church now stands, was a tall building which was used as a public hall and a Writing School. A person took great pride in his penmanship and practiced for hours to obtain beautiful script. Mrs. Abbie Litchfield, who lived to be almost one hundred and two years old, showed me an autograph book which she had earned as a girl for improvement in penmanship while attending this writing school. It also gave many a young blade an excuse to beau the girl of his choice to and from these classes.

Later on this building became a tin shop where a thriving business was conducted making tinware. This building was moved later on, further up on High Street, where it is now the home of James Wills. Mr. Wills tells me he still finds scraps of tin in his basement.

The blacksmith shop was next door to the tin shop and was owned by Francis Merritt. Fortunately indeed is the child who has stood in the doorway of a blacksmith shop and heard the ringing anvil, the hiss of the hot tongs as they are plunged into the cold water, and whiffed the odd pungent smell as the shoe is fitted to the horse's foot. The "Whoa, there boy! Easy Now" as the blacksmith spoke to a nervous horse to "gentle him".

Further along on High Street, where Earle Ricker's cranberry house now stands, was a store run by a Mr. Randall. If Mr. Delano should happen to be out of some special item one could probably get it at Randall's. He had a supply, no doubt, of Ferris waists for little girls, and Goff's braid to trim frocks, as well as his line of groceries. I'm sure he must have stocked Pears' and Castile soaps for the fastidious. Most folks used good homemade yellow soap but kept Pears' for special occasions and Castile for the babies.

Hiram Randall's stage coaches and the High Street Hall are stories by themselves. The hall, situated right on the edge of my land, is the result of a feud between two old timers, and if Mr. K wanted to shut off the light and afternoon sun from Mr. B, I can personally vouch that he accomplished his purpose.